

SIX

DIALOGUES

TOUCHING

THE NATURE OF MAN.

C.D.
(See Church's
index)

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DELEGATES

The following Dialogues might form a specimen of the practicability of making Ethics or Metaphysics subservient to Religion—my endeavour has been to regard, however loosely and imperfectly, the Nature of Man as a *whole*, and to trace his being from its beginnings, as they are born in him, to his ultimate and most exalted destinies.

B. A.

Jan. 1836.

DIALOGUE I.

I HAD frequently requested my friend, who was a far better thinker than myself, to give me his own views of the powers of man, and to exhibit his novel system (for such I considered it) of what he would persist in calling "human Dynamics." I one day found him alone with a Nicomachæan Ethics before him—this was, I admit, rather to my horror—however, I began the conversation. Now you are well stored, can you consent to put yourself under command, and become my catechumen?

——Most gladly I can—for the very word implies instruction on your part, and passive reception of the truth on mine.——Nay, scarcely passive—the responses I obtain to my queries will become my oracles—the catechist, in this case, shall be the debtor, and yourself (unless you shrink from the responsibility) my initiator into the Dynamic mysteries.——You are severe.——Not so, I fain would join you in investigating, and (if tenable) in substantiating some one compact

scheme, that might classify and distinguish the various powers of the human animal, natural as well as acquired, intellectual as well as moral, spiritual again as well as natural.——Gently, my friend, you have already been guilty of a most unphilosophical confusion of terms—substitute *native* * for *natural* in the first instance, and the division stands more fairly ; however, you have pleased me by your endeavour to exhibit the *whole* of man. I cannot proceed on any other than on *Catholic* beginnings.——You are punning—surely *Catholic* is a term to be applied to the church only, and then in the sense of *universally diffused over the world*.——I am not positive on that point, but I *am* positive that Catholic doctrines are those which exhibit things as *whole*, and exhibit them, too, impartially and with all their due bearings. I *am* positive that the Catholic church regards the Bible as a whole, Christianity as a whole, Man as a whole : thus, “ the Old Testament is not contrary to the New.” “ The Deity is neither three only nor one only, but three in one.” “ The Saviour is neither man only nor GOD only, but GOD in man.” And thus, lastly “ man regenerate is neither all sense nor all faith, neither flesh only nor spirit only ;” but as we read that “ the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam a quickening spirit,” so the church, I conceive, holds to be

* φυσικός.

the case in the two-fold life of the individual Christian ; but really I beg your pardon, proceed in catechizing.——You have given me a clue whereby to escape the mazes, leading * some to enthusiasm, and some to a very different extreme ; however, if you please, let us discuss the natural man first, only do not beset me with Aristotle or Aldrich's Logic.——You have touched on a dangerous matter. I am tempted to fly off in praise of our University system of education, as being (if I may so express it) *Catholic* ; that is, not *generally diffused*, or *generally useful* ; not, like an Encyclopædia, including from A to Z, but entire and uniform—*ἑλόν τι*—forgive the pedantry—tending to discipline the natural soul, in order to its spiritual enlightenment. Language is (as it were) the Body—Poetry and History the Heart—Logic, Philosophy, and mathematical Science compose the Mind, to all which departments Theology should insensibly become an animating and pervading, an exalting and illuminating, spirit.——Very likely, but indeed this is too much, you are off the question.——A little *ἀποσδιόνυσος*, I confess, we will resume another day more *logically*.

* See Tabula Theologica, with Doctrinal Essays, by the Rev. Robert Cole.

DIALOGUE II.

I suspect my good friend had decided on assuming a less elevated tone when we next met—for he began with somewhat of melancholy—I am inclined to fear my Dynamics will prove a failure—at any rate, I must shew only a brief outline, and you shall judge—and recollect, I do not pretend to give anything new—first, then, analyse the nature (I use *Nature* for lack of a better term, rather misliking *essence*, substance &c.) of the human being.—I suppose (was my answer) he consists of *body* and *soul*, and the soul seems to lie in the *heart* and *head*. I believe I mean what is right, except that you would say the soul was partly moral, partly intellectual.—I might so—your words, however, are plain old English and shorter—therefore more forcible, and more easily remembered—can you tell me anything more of these component parts of Man, I mean his body, his moral soul, and his understanding.—Nay, I am to be the Catechist—can *you* tell anything more about them?—I must even try—I say that each of these * is a mass of powers, active and passive, or rather passive and active, for passion

* More accurately, is the substratum of a mass of powers, we know neither matter nor mind, only the powers of each.

precedes action—the body, the heart, the head,
 must each be *acted on* before it can itself *act*—
 what say you?——Explain.——You mean,
 exemplify—can the arm move, before the will
 moves it? can the heart tremble, before it is
 frightened? can the eye see, before light has
 reached the retina? to proceed—there are, then,
 powers or capabilities or capacities of admitting,
 receiving, suffering, in a word *passive powers*,
 and there are powers, abilities, capacities of pro-
 jecting, giving, doing; that is, *active powers*.
 ——And these in each of your three depart-
 ments?——In each——.Again, these hu-
 man *δυνάμεις* may be regarded either as incipient,
 as progressive, or as perfected—in other words, as
native (recollect, they are all and always *natural*,
 and indeed most properly so when nearest to their
 perfection) as *native*, I repeat, as *habitual in-*
completely or as *habitual completely*. I should
 here remark, that as nothing human is arrived at
 its end, these powers are never actually “in esse”
 at that final state of complete habituation—no
 man can swim for ever, nor perfectly control his
 anger—nor energize unceasingly on his own ab-
 stractions.——You are right there.——Per-
 haps I tire you—we will simplify our scheme by
 cutting off the perfect powers for the present,
 and place our Dynamic Table something in this
 form.

POWERS.

CORPOREAL.

Passive.

Active.

Native. Progressive. Native. Progressive.

MORAL.

Passive.

Active.

Native. Progressive. Native. Progressive.

INTELLECTUAL.

Passive.

Active.

Native. Progressive. Native. Progressive.

This exhibits, I imagine, man by nature, as we agreed, he is not thus ever actually found perfect; nor, considering his condition and circumstances, as well as his proneness to *decay as he improves*, are any of his various powers * perfectible on earth; and yet they all are aiming, striving, pointing, pressing towards their end, they are unsatisfied, unfinished; ἀγαθοῦ τινος πάντα ἐφλεσθαι δοκεῖ. I believe I have quoted inaccurately. — So much the better, I am no Grecian, but your plan becomes interesting, I will think it over before we resume the conversation.

DIALOGUE III.

Something like complacency was visible in my friend's countenance when he on another occasion enquired whether he was right—and whether I was clearly convinced that human nature was made for an end to which it most indisputably is ever striving to attain, but which is yet ever unattainable. — I never doubted it. — And more than this, not merely is the body marred by external causes, the affections perverted or deadened, the understanding darkened or (which comes to the

* See note A.

same thing) dazzled, and that this is so, who can dispute who knows either himself or others? not only do things extrinsic, and therefore uncontrollable, thus affect the powers of man and hinder their full developement; but *something in them*, seeming to sympathize and conspire with all that is without, effects their secret ruin, whilst it also urges them forward to improving and increasing energies.——You are rather obscure—but I take your meaning to be that things decay as they advance.——Very well—with the body and with the intellect this is self evident, I fancy it holds good also with the moral part—indeed I am sure of it, with this restriction, that I have only touched on man as he is by nature. I wish to shew you, as philosophically as I can, the finiteness of man as such, and the manifest necessity, in order to the completion of God's work, of a second nature and a new creation.——Reasoning, I suppose, from man's very constitution?——From the very constitution of his various *δυνάμεις*. Now it appears to me that as the *ἦθος* or character of man resides in his heart or moral soul, and as it is *that* which gives a *tone*, as it were, to the whole man—we should regard the heart as the department especially—not solely but more remarkably—susceptible of improvement, and as being most properly and primarily the seat of the regenerative influences that eventually are to operate on his en-

tire compound being.——Why, certainly the body remains unaltered while on earth, and the intellect is very partially admitted to partake of celestial illumination, “*we know in part.*”——And, more than that, the intellect is enlightened only through the medium of the heart, “*He that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine.*”——It appears then that while the body remains unchanged, and the mind comparatively unilluminated, the heart is undergoing those gradual changes which are to be followed simultaneously by intellectual brightness, subsequently by corporeal glories, “*we shall all be changed.*”——And wherein do you conceive the change to consist?——I fancy you will not like my answer; it will contain (may I presume to be a little prophetic?) all the six *κινήσεις* * of Aristotle, it will be, nay already is, a *γένεσις* of the spiritual man; a *φθορά* of the natural; it is an *αύξησις* of all the capabilities even unto their perfection; a gradual *μείωσις* of internal and external difficulties; † it will be an *ἀλλοίωσις* of relation and of objects, and a *κατὰ τόπον μεταβολή* from earth to heaven.

——Thank you, but I prefer your former train

* “Changes or movements”—they are generation, corruption, increase, decrease, alteration, locomotion.

† It would seem unnatural (so to say) to expect in any state short of final perfection, an *entire* freedom from struggling, which is in fact the very life-blood of earthly virtue.

of thought. I had hoped to see that man's *morality* (as you would term it) is peculiarly adapted to receive the germina of his new creation, and that the same capacities that carry him through the world of sense are to convey him, *after the infusion of a principle entirely and exclusively divine,** to the world of spirit.——You have anticipated me, but I will attempt that part of our subject when we meet again. Adieu.

DIALOGUE IV.

I felt confused as to the definite use, intended in our former dialogues, of the words body, soul, and nature, as applied to man. When, therefore, my friend attempted the accomplishment of his promise to investigate the analogy between the spiritual and natural energies, I stopped him.—Are not all good uses of the soul natural,† and all evil uses unnatural?——That is exactly the question you *ought* to ask; surely they are, the in-born *δυνάμεις* ‡ are all for good; their end and aim,

* With this fundamental distinction, it might not be inexpedient to analyse Christian Ethics after the manner of heathen philosophy.

† See note B.

‡ Powers, talents, means—probably no one word in English expresses the full meaning of this term.

consequently their perfection, is good. He, however, that implanted them, has willed that they cannot *of themselves* actually reach that end. He has presented other objects for their attainment. He has ordained obstacles to their developement; they are consequently incapable, utterly incapable, of fulfilling of themselves, their high destiny; this their incapability is often called natural to them; and so, alas! it has become by the voluntary decision of the first possessor of these *δυνάμεις* themselves; *he chose* that sensible life should be the element of himself and his posterity, and such has become their *nature*: but still a spiritual life is their's also; their destiny remains to be accomplished; their powers remain to be perfected; their own noble objects remain to be presented to their appetency; a paradise remains to be their home. This purpose for which the first creation was insufficient, is to be effected by the second—the “living soul,” is well enough here, but the “quickenings spirit” must have dwelt within us, if our powers are to be developed, our energies continued, our dispositions of soul perfected, hereafter.

———You have not used that expression, dispositions of soul before—what does it imply?———

First, by *soul* I mean all that lives—the body, with its powers of growth and nurture, of strength and activity; the heart, (I mean the moral soul, more properly called the *spirit* of man,) with its

capacities of passion and of action ; and the intellect, with its perceptions and conceptions, its abstraction, decision, reasoning, and all other faculties it may possess : by *soul*, then, you see, I mean whatever in man *lives* ; that is, as well acts as is acted upon—not only does but 'suffers—whatever, being immaterial, man is conscious of.

——But you included the body.——I ought not to have done so, if the language had afforded me an adequate expression—substitute, if you prefer it, the word animal or animated being. Secondly, by dispositions I would imply improving and progressive powers—powers that have held conversation in the world, and practised how to treat each other and external objects—powers, that from being native, have become habitual, from being good in posse, have become good in esse ; powers that are, more or less closely, approximating to their ultimate and originally intended perfection.——I have delayed you by my queries—the Catechumen does well to be submissive.——But I fear he will have little left to say. I will give you a general outline of the feelings more especially bearing on our subject. You must allow me time, lest I break down at the close.

DIALOGUE V.

My friend soon recalled me to the subject, thus: The spirit, or moral part, of the human soul must adapt itself to its object—adapted to an evil object, it becomes evil; to a good object, it becomes good. Excited powers are passions; regulated powers become states or dispositions:—excited to improper objects, regulated by improper rules, they are bad passions and bad states; the same with other objects, and other management might undoubtedly have been good. In analysing, then, any human character, (as a character is composed of several dispositions combined, either in harmony or in discord,) we must investigate the several *δυνάμεις* of man, and the several objects presented to their appetency.——So I should have imagined, perhaps you will now, at last, proceed to the objects offered to the spiritualized morality of the human soul, and shew their fitness for the development of its capabilities.——I consider, as I before said, the *moral* soul, because in it the change is most perceptibly wrought, and because it forms a link between the body and the mind, the one being common to man with the brutes, and the other with superior spirits; and is consequently more peculiarly hu-

man, and so more properly than either of man's other functions the seat of his probation and improvement—this premised, I would beg you to give me any general principle you please on which to classify the moral feelings.——You are rather hard upon me—I know as little of Ethics as of Logic—and it seems to me that the task you set me must require both. If I must propose, let us divide the feelings (or susceptibilities, for I suppose they are the same things) according to their *objects*. I will classify them into those arising at an equal or inferior object, and those arising at a superior; I mean such as sympathy in the one class and admiration in the other; those are, I fancy, simple feelings.——Probably they are, and so are also pity, grief, longing towards * (as various applications of the human spirit to inferior or equal objects) as well as confidence, devotion, awe, which are addressed to a superior. Hope may be a compound of confidence and *longing towards*, and Love perhaps combines these two with sympathy and admiration. Now I contend that these and many other moral δυνάμεις are given us in order to be exercised when suitable objects are presented, and thus by management and discipline to be ultimately perfected. Earthly objects are ever before us, but they prove fallacious.

* τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν—*Epithymia* is sometimes so used.

We sympathise, and our sympathy is mocked ; we admire, and our admiration is misplaced ; we pity, our compassion is abused ; we confide, our trust becomes our ruin ; we grieve for an unworthy loss ; we devote ourselves to an unworthy gain ; we long for that which cannot satisfy our longing ; we revere what shall not succour our helplessness : we hope, we love—we are disappointed, we are deserted.——You seem to speak feelingly, but assuredly this is all too true. You have yet to shew me that these and other tendencies of our being are supplied in the second class of objects, offered originally at our second birth, and gradually developed during our spiritual life.——This is an awful subject, and let us pause here.

DIALOGUE VI.

I soon attacked my talkative companion again. Evidently, I observed, the corporeal powers are adapted to the dawnings of celestial life exhibited on earth ; that is, in *prayer*, which is essentially the effusion of the moral soul to God, the uplifted hand, the bended knee, the eye raised, and the voice that utters what the heart feels and hopes

for, is surely something ; and so again, in works of charity and in the discipline of chastity, the corporeal faculties exhibit their full and indisputable adjustment to the purposes of grace. Before we resume the moral department, give me your idea of our intellectual adaptation to the same ends——I must really cease to weary you—a *word to the wise*, however, may suffice. *Abstraction* is the very essence of devotion, and so thought Plato* and even Aristotle†—intellectualism with them was spiritualism ; *we* have the advantage of a Zoar to retreat to on our way to the mountain—we have *moralism* to lead us gently from sensualism to spirituality. Our intellect *may* hereafter be our highest joy, when it shall become assimilated to the Deity by the knowledge of Himself—we shall be like Him—For we shall see Him as He is. But, on the contrary, it is now our most exalted privilege to see Him *as we are*, to look on Him as a man, and to bring our own morality towards His perfection by exercising to Him, as their object, all our moral powers, by rendering Him always (or as much and as often as we can) the occasion of our purest and most elevated emotions, by giving up to Him our characters to be formed within us, and our various dispositions to be perfected.——I think I un-

* *νόστος*, distinguished by him from *νόστος*—see *Politeia*.

† *θεωρία*—*τὰ θεῶν ἀφ᾽ ὧν*.

derstand you now—you would effect this by applying our entire moral spirit to his worship.— Does the term worship include all your meaning?

——I think it may; in worship we may sympathize with one who is our Fellow-Man, and admire his condescension as our God; we may trust in Him as a Saviour, whom we compassionate as a Sufferer, while we grieve that for sin He died, we may with joy devote ourselves to the LORD that thus hath bought our service. Our longing affection may be satisfied in his fulness of grace and glory; and at the same time we may “stand in awe, and sin not,” because He is an HOLY God; and finally uniting every power and every emotion, we may hope in Him as long as we are mortal, we may love Him even in our immortality!

——Amen! And then, my friend, Morality shall have done her work; the corporeal element of life shall be renewed, and the body glorified; the moral quickening shall be complete, and the spirit sanctified; the intellectual principle shall be enlightened with divinity itself, and the mind shall be admitted to behold its pure Creator “face to face.”——Yes, this shall be, as we clearly feel and know, the consummation of what has been begun in Baptism—“we know God, or rather, are known of Him” (for these relations are absolutely inseparable) only *in part* we talk about Him, we think about Him, we *reason* about Him—but

then *abstraction* from all things else shall be contemplation of Him ; then the King of earthly man shall lay aside His sovereignty as the anointed Son of Humanity, and be regarded as the Ineffable and Eternal WORD. The Sanctifier that had engaged himself in working secretly the renewal of mankind shall leave His finished work. Spirits that had offered obstacles to its accomplishment shall have vanished ; spirits that had lent their aid to it shall rest from their labour. Man shall worship and be blest—God shall be “all in all”—forgive me, I lose myself—perhaps I am forgetting that you think me running wild, and that, though I fancy myself a Catholic, you and others may have designated this “Enthusiasm.”

